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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

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48

26 January 1968
No. 0004/68

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VIETNAM

Communist strategists apparently plan to kick off a major country-wide military campaign sometime around Tet, the lunar new year at the end of January. The main pressure will probably be mounted in the northern provinces.

The opening round apparently occurred in Quang Tri Province on 19 January with a series of probes against allied positions in the Khe Sanh area, followed up later in the week with large-scale mortar, rocket, and artillery bombardments. Heavy fighting also occurred near Gio Linh in the northeastern corner of the province, reflecting enemy efforts to maintain pressure and tie down US forces all along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). On the western end of the DMZ, at least 16,000 North Vietnamese regulars are in the hills surrounding the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh, while up to two enemy divisions threaten allied strongpoints in the eastern half of the province. 3.3(h)(2)

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A North Vietnamese [redacted] who defected at Khe Sanh last weekend, claims that the mission of his unit--the North Vietnamese 325C Division--is to overrun every US base be-

tween the Laotian border and Con Thien before the Tet holidays. The defector's remarks suggest that enemy troops are being given an especially heavy dose of propaganda exhortation, which is indicative of the major significance the Communists appear to be placing on the present offensive.

The deserter claimed that the Quang Tri campaign was of such importance that it was being controlled directly by the North Vietnamese Defense Ministry in Hanoi.

There are indications that enemy operations in the northern provinces may be coordinated with attacks in the western highlands and perhaps in northern III Corps. There has been continued maneuvering by subordinates of the B-3 Front, both along the Kontum-Pleiku provincial border area and in the mountains of Kontum adjacent to the Laos-Cambodian border, where at least five North Vietnamese regiments have been identified. Several recently captured documents discuss plans to attack specific targets in Pleiku--including the province capital, possibly in conjunction with actions in the triborder area.

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Although fighting in northern III Corps has slackened recently, elements of three Communist divisions--the Viet Cong 5th and 9th, and the North Vietnamese 7th--are in a position to threaten several key points, including the Loc Ninh - Song Be area.

Reinforcing the likelihood of wide-ranging enemy offensive operations before or soon after Tet are the tapering off of the northeastern monsoon in the DMZ area and the new moon cycle itself, both natural factors that are known to create conditions favorable to enemy initiatives.

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Hanoi Rejects Reciprocity

North Vietnam seems unwilling at present to go any further

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in publicly elaborating on its position concerning talks with the US. In contrast to its efforts prior to President Johnson's State of the Union address to underscore the reasonableness of the Communist position, Hanoi now seems bent on preventing any exaggerated interpretations of its intentions. After strongly denouncing the President's restatement of the San Antonio formula, North Vietnam-

ese media generally have concentrated on presenting Hanoi's usual hard-line treatment of the war and have ignored the issue of negotiations. On 22 January, the DRV representative in Paris canceled a scheduled interview with a New York Times official on the grounds that he had said everything he had to say at this time. [REDACTED]

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